



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3222

September 2, 2021

Mr. Adam Mosseri
Head of Instagram
Instagram
200 Jefferson Drive
Menlo Park, CA 94025

Mr. Mark Zuckerberg
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer
Facebook
1 Hacker Way
Menlo Park, CA 94025

Dear Mr. Mosseri and Mr. Zuckerberg:

I write to you today regarding Instagram's censorship of the Gold Star mother of a recently fallen Marine. Shana Chappell, mother of Lance Corporal Kareem Nikoui, posted on Instagram about the devastation she felt over her son's death in Afghanistan. She described the heartbreak she experienced upon the grim realization she never would be able to hug her son again. As an American and the mother of a Marine, my heart aches to hear these emotional and devastating words from this grieving Gold Star mother. Regrettably, Instagram decided to disable Ms. Chappell's account for this post without explanation.

Although Ms. Chappell's account was restored after public outcry, the original act of censorship follows a disturbing trend from Instagram and its parent company Facebook, where free speech and political discourse are censored on the platforms. I'm deeply troubled by Instagram's lack of an explanation for this mishap. Big tech has sunk to new lows by silencing the parent of a fallen soldier. Our Gold Star families and the American public deserve better more. After sacrificing so much for the safety and security of our Nation, the words and opinions of those so deeply affected by these events should not be stifled by authoritarian Silicon Valley censors.

While a representative from Facebook told the press that Ms. Chappell's post did not violate the company's policies, that did not stop the firm from attempting to get away with shutting her down. Many questions remain as to why her post was originally flagged and her account disabled. It is disturbing to witness acts of blatant censorship emanate from Silicon Valley even as firms such as yours enjoy unique protections under the law.

I also seek assurances that no outside influences were involved in the disabling of Ms. Chappell's account. I am aware that the White House acknowledged it would be flagging for Facebook, Instagram's parent company, posts it deemed "problematic." Weaponizing the power of the Executive Branch against an open public discourse is wholly un-American, and it would be a crucial error for Instagram to assist in this. It would also be a mistake for Facebook and

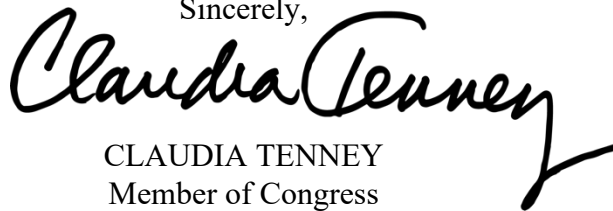
related companies to proactively censor speech in a blatantly partisan manner in an attempt to curry political favor and avoid legal scrutiny.

I therefore demand answers, along with supporting documentation, to the following questions about what led to the decision to disable Ms. Chappell's account and censor her personal and heartfelt tribute to her son – one of our Nation's bravest heroes:

- Why was Ms. Chappell's account disabled? Did her tribute to her fallen son violate any of Instagram's policies?
- Which office within Instagram was responsible for making the decision to disable Ms. Chappell's account?
- Where is the office responsible for the decision to disable Ms. Chappell's account located? Were any foreign nationals or governments involved in this process?
- Was any person or agency from the Executive Branch consulted before making this decision? Was this decision made to curry favor with persons or agencies responsible for oversight of Instagram or Facebook?
- What steps are Instagram and Facebook taking to ensure that similar errors do not occur in the future?

I would appreciate a reply no later than September 15, 2021. Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Claudia Tenney". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail on the "y".

CLAUDIA TENNEY
Member of Congress